

Falling-Down Drunk— For What?



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The answer to that headline question for one Sailor was a lengthy hospital stay. At last check, the 21-year-old E-1 had been hospitalized 28 days for his one-night toot. It all started when the Sailor's ship returned from a four-day underway period.


Between 1500 and 1800, he consumed two mixed drinks and a double mixed drink before accompanying a buddy to the base bowling alley, where they

devoured a pizza. The two left there about 1900 and went to the base mini-mart, where they bought a liter of hard liquor, then proceeded to the BEQ lounge to watch TV and drink the booze with soda.

By 2000, the liquor bottle was about half empty, and the buddy had had enough, so he returned to the ship. Another shipmate was driving by the BEQ entrance an hour later when he saw the E-1 stagger to the lawn and fall on his face. The shipmate immediately summoned the ship's duty MAA, who was making rounds at the barracks. Together, they helped the E-1 up, but he couldn't stand on his own.

The duty MAA called for an ambulance, which took the E-1 to a local Army hospital. In transit, he vomited and inhaled his own vomit, which severely damaged his lungs. Doctors at the hospital treated and admitted him to ICU. His BAC at that time was 0.240.

What caused this problem? No one knows for sure. The E-1 wasn't known as a frequent consumer of alcohol, and there were no previous signs of alcohol abuse. He had attended the command-indoctrination lecture on alcohol abuse but hadn't yet been to a PREVENT class because of the ship's operational schedule and the fact he had been on board less than four months. *[Personal responsibility and values education training, or PREVENT, is the Navy's alcohol-and-drug-prevention class for Sailors 18 to 26 years old. The goal of the three-day program is to provide Sailors with the necessary education and training to be viable, personally responsible, contributing members of the Navy. PREVENT is one element of the Navy's Right Spirit campaign, designed to deglamorize the use of alcohol.]* The mandatory buddy plan wasn't required for home-port liberty.

As the CO said, "We were lucky not to lose a Sailor, and we'll use this incident as a further wake-up call to the effects of alcohol abuse." Besides those efforts already mentioned, the ship always includes alcohol as a topic during safety stand-downs and one-on-one, division-officer counseling about liberty plans. 

For more info, go to: <http://www.collegedrinkprevention.gov/OtherAlcoholInformation/factsAboutAlcoholPoisoning.aspx> or <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/PEOPLE/outreach/SafeSobr/15qp/web/idalc.html>.